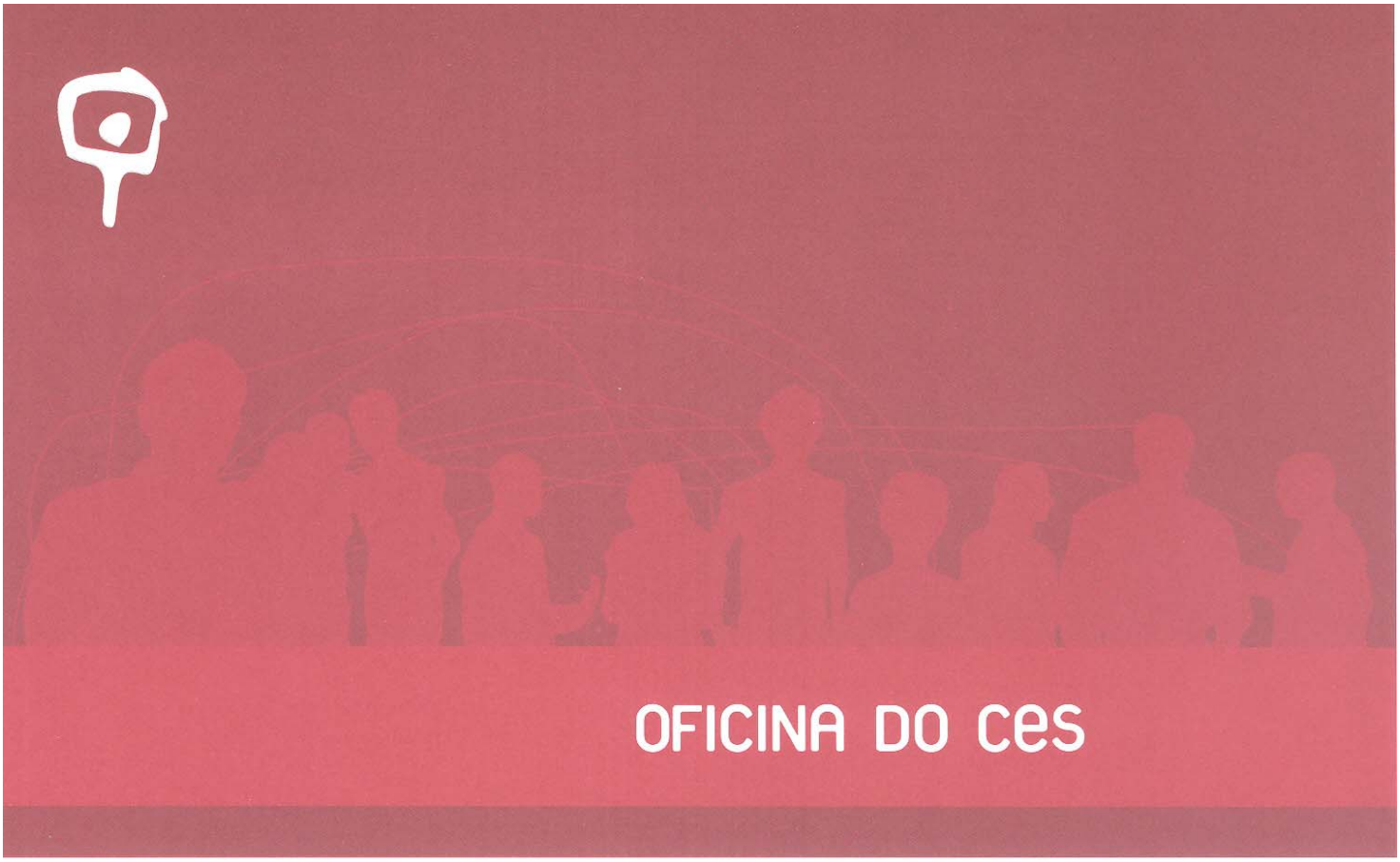


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# SOLIDARITY ART AND REPRESSIVE REGIMES

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# Solidarity Art and Repressive Regimes

**Abstract:** Many oppressed groups use art as a weapon of struggle against repressive regimes. What effects might such art have? This paper focuses on solidarity art, a little-studied subset of resistance art, and suggests that it may help inform members of the public abroad about human rights violations, and raise economic and moral support for cells of resistance. Within the country under a repressive government, the spaces in which such art is made can provide a forum for the dissemination and discussion of information about the extent and nature of government abuses and other ills that accompany the regime.

One of the current pressing issues in Latin America is justice for the victims of human rights violations incurred during periods of dictatorship. In Chile, members of the military are being tried for violent and repressive acts committed during the Pinochet regime of 1973-1990. This paper focuses on the victims of human rights violations, specifically the relatives of the disappeared and women from the shantytowns of Santiago, Chile, and particularly on the work they did in order to maintain themselves and their families and undermine the dictatorship, between 1973 and 1990. This work was the production of denunciatory art for export.

The question I am addressing in this paper is: how did their art, and how might art more broadly, facilitate resistance against repressive regimes? I will show that art that is exported, and that is made collectively may, firstly, help raise international awareness about the conditions people are enduring, and support for organizations and individuals working to undermine a repressive regime. Secondly, inside the society in which it is made, art may catalyze the dissemination of information, including information about how human rights are being violated and the extent and causes of repression and poverty.

Repressive regimes can, ironically, be periods of creative ferment, during which artists and others seek new ways to communicate that evade repression and censorship (Dorfman, 1978; Brink, 1997; Williamson, 1989; Neustadt, 2001). New art forms and artists arise and pre-existing genres evolve,[1] while more established art forms, venues, and artists are severely

[1] Scholars of non-conformist art under dictatorships have also used the terms "underground artists," "nonconformists," "unofficial artists," and "dissidents."

repressed. When, for example, doctrines of national security result in the phenomenon of political prisoners, these prisoners may begin making art in their prisons, or their relatives may create resistance art. In Chile, for example, political prisoners carved tiny sculptures out of avocado seeds and bone, and carved pictures in pieces of scrap metal, from their jail cells. Some of the relatives of the disappeared in Chile produced protest songs and a protest dance, as a way of denouncing the disappearances or earning much-needed income.[2] Their well-known "cueca sola[3]" was an adaptation of Chile's flirtatious national dance, with the woman dancing alone to suggest the disappearance of her partner. Young people began painting murals on public walls in shantytowns at night, with anti-regime or pro-peace statements (Kunzle, 1978). Semi-clandestine theater evolved, with messages about the regime (Boyle, 1992). A "vast cultural movement" arose, as Dorfman (1978) calls the varied forms of cultural resistance.

Resistance art emerged under numerous other repressive or authoritarian regimes, or repressive periods under obstensibly democratic regimes. In Soviet Russia, many non-conformist artists produced their work and exhibited secretly, in apartments or other non-standard places (Baigell and Baigell, 1995). Under Hitler's Germany, anti-Nazi postcards were one of many vehicles of expression (Chametzky, 2001). In the United States, women in slavery produced slave narratives (Easton, 2000), Japanese Americans in concentration camps made crafts (Dusselier, 2005), and Chicanos and Chicanas made murals against state repression and cultural and economic exclusion (Cockroft and Barnet-Sánchez, 1993). In Eastern Turkey, the Kurds have, for decades, used song to resist enforced Turkification (Kanakis, 2005). During the Second World War, members of the French resistance used literature as a form of struggle against German occupation (Reichelberg and Kauffman, 2000), and in Prague, Jewish rabbis, when publicly humiliated by Nazis, sang in defiance.[4] Student members of the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square in 1988 constructed a statue of democracy symbolizing the freedom they were struggling for, sang songs, and published poetry containing hidden messages, in newspapers.

Resistance art made under repressive governments has contributed in different ways to chipping away at these regimes' power. Popular music in El Salvador's National Liberation

[2] Interview with Conjunto Folclórico [Folk Song Group] of the Association of Relatives of Detained and Disappeared.
[3] Literally "cueca alone." Whereas "the cueca," Chile's national dance, is a couple dance that tells the story of a flirtation, the "cueca alone" shows a woman dancing alone because her partner has disappeared. It was created by the relatives of the disappeared.
[4] Personal communication with Samuel P. Oliner, 12th April 2008, Pacific Sociological Association meeting in Portland, Oregon.

Movement, for example, helped mobilize and educate movement supporters and potential sympathizers, contributing to the reinforcement of shared grievances, the development of strategies for their resolution, and the motivation of people to participate in the movement (Almeida and Urbizagastegui, 1999). Theater in Soviet Poland, when opposition politics was not possible, "kept social alternatives alive" (Goldfarb, 1982). The works of Czech avant-garde artists under communist rule proved that it was still possible to hold and express views which differed from official doctrines put forward by the party, and the secret activities of art groups raised morale, convincing unofficial artists that they were not alone in the fight (Svašek, 1997). Also in Czechoslovakia, *samizdat* (underground literature) "contributed to the survival of a parallel, independent culture which stood in contrast to the mostly sterile artistic efforts sustained by the neo-Stalinist authorities" (Hájek, 1994: 128). In the dissident community of Czechoslovaia, social values unaffected by current doctrine were preserved, and culture was the medium of this community, in particular the dissemination and reading of banned books or the performance of banned plays. Theaters became platforms of public protest (Hájek, 1994). In Chile under Pinochet, film made by exiles served to stimulate a campaign of international education to generate popular pressure for the diplomatic and economic isolation of the junta (Burton, 1978). Under apartheid South Africa, theater became one of few vehicles through which something of the black experience could be communicated to white audiences, and one of the focal points of popular conscientization and resisistance against apartheid. It also defined and interpreted the extent and nature of blacks' suffering, and stimulated an acknowledgement of a common experience shared by all, a threat posed to all alike, and a challenge requiring an effective response, inspiring the community. Moreover, performances were occasions of celebration of community spirit and solidarity (Brink, 1997). Sculptures made by the Makonde in Tanzania and Mozambique under Portuguese rule were anti-colonial symbols at fraternal fund-raising events or in liberal homes (Stephen, 1990). Poems and graphic art produced under the authoritarian regime in Nigeria opened up critical reflection on the militarized environment (Obododimma, 1998). Lastly, Palestinian art has served a source of national pride and reassurance for the Palestinian public, and affirmed that they do not stand alone (Boullata, 2004).

These and other studies of resistance art under repressive regimes have neglected to examine the political effects of a particular kind of resistance art: "solidarity art.[5]" Solidarity art is art that individuals buy or help sell or export in large part so as to help a group of

[5] I borrow the term from Kathryn Poethig, personal communication, University of California at Berkeley, 2007.

people. In many cases, solidarity art is not made by trained artists, and not of the kind we might define as "high art." Examples of solidarity art include Zapatista dolls sold in the Eighties in Europe in solidarity with the indigenous rights movement in Southern Mexico, embroidered pictures and bags by mothers in Palestine, and embroidery from Chiapas, sold currently in the United States, including, recently, at an anti-war march in San Francisco, United States. Similarly, the University of California at Berkeley campus recently held an "Art for Darfur" event at which local artists sold their art works to raise money for the victims of the crisis. A goal of this paper is to explore some of the political consequences of the making of solidarity art, with a focus on Pinochet's Chile.

Beginning just over a year after the 1973 *coup d'état*, women from Santiago's shantytowns and relatives of the disappeared began making the art. For most, the motivation was to earn money with which to feed their families. For a minority (a group of relatives of the disappeared) the wish to engage in a therapeutic activity and to tell their story were salient motives. The women worked, typically, in chapels in shantytowns, as priests were willing to lend them a room.

**Figure 1 ─** Inside an arpillera workshop

**Figure 2 ─** The outside of an arpillera workshop. Photograph courtesy of Fluh Voionmaa.

Their art, pictures in cloth the size of a cafeteria tray and smaller, were named "arpilleras." They showed the repression and poverty that the women were enduring, and their resistance. The arpilleras of the relatives of the disappeared also showed the detention and search for their disappeared.

**Figure 3 ─** Arpillera depicting military vehicle firing water, soldiers beating civilians, and a closed factory (unemployment)

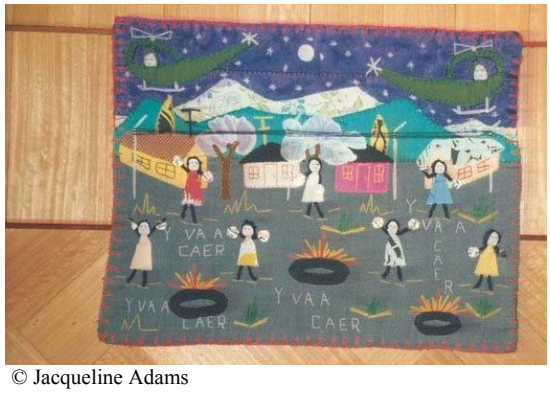
**Figure 4 ─** Arpillera depicting man being arrested, to subsequently disappear




**Figure 5 ─** Arpillera showing mothers cooking at a soup kitchen for children



**Figure 6 ─** Civilians banging saucepans in protest, a barricade on fire



They depict soldiers beating protesters, shantytown soup kitchens (often families' only means of feeding themselves), women's subsistence-level entrepreneurial activities such as washing clothes and baking bread, closed factories signalling high unemployment, arrests and disappearance, and the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Few were sold locally. Most were exported, in a clandestine fashion, by a Chilean human rights organization that had protection from the Catholic Church. This organization sent them to priests, Catholic organizations, human rights activists, and exiled Chileans, in Europe, North America, and Latin America. They, in turn, sold them to the public, typically to liberals who frequented churches, cultural festivals, solidarity events for Chile or other repressive regimes. Its goals in doing so were to help the victims of repression and poverty. It became involved with the arpilleras because it worked closely with the relatives of the disappeared, providing them with legal aid, and thought it could help them further by assisting them in this way. The buyers bought out of solidarity, in other words, they bought in order to help the victims of the regime in Chile.

This research is part of a larger project based on 170 interviews with the artists; Chilean exiles and European human rights activists who sold the art in Europe; buyers in Europe, Canada, and the United States; and the members of the Vicaría de la Solidaridad (the Chilean human rights organization that exported the art). It was also based on participant observation with two art workshops, archival research in the Archdiocese of Santiago, and the creation of a visual database of photographs of the art works and their makers and sales venues.

**Raising International Awareness**

What effect may art have in undermining repressive regimes? Solidarity art helps raise international awareness about state violence and social problems. Even though it is often bought by individuals who have already heard that there is a problem in the country the art is from, the art can help provides a vivid sense of people's experiences under the regime. Many Europeans knew about the 1973 coup in Chile, for example, but they knew little about how exactly the repression and poverty affected the lives of large numbers of people. There was a need to make their understanding more vivid or, as Andre, a French human rights activist who sold arpilleras in Paris, says, "concrete:"

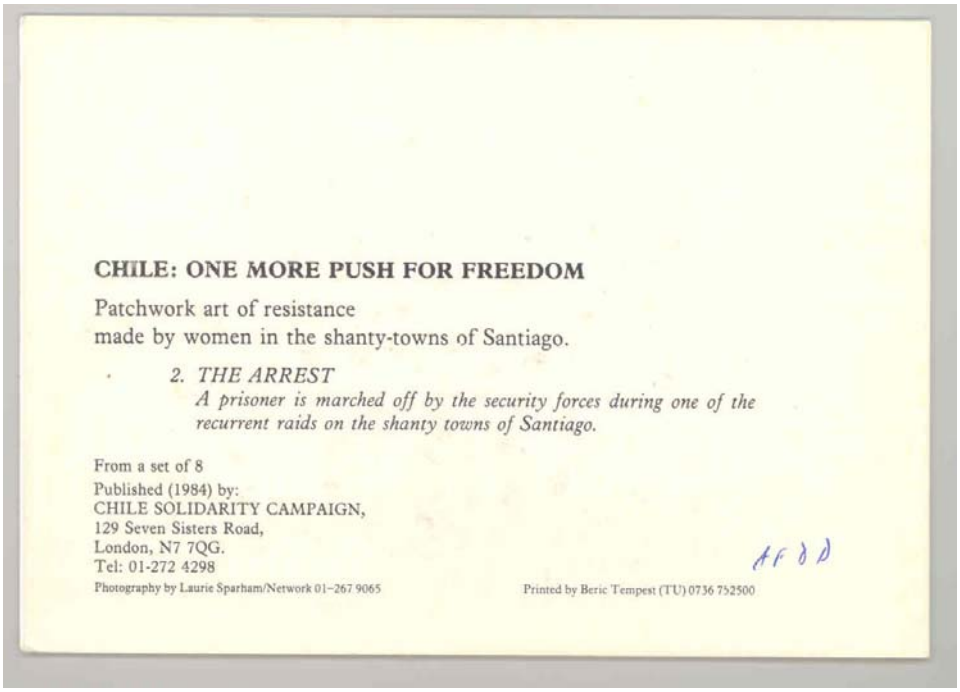
> Many French people were affected by, by the Coup. Because there was a kind of sympathy for, em, for Allende, and, and the, the, how shall I say, and his, his coming to power. And so, em, there was fertile ground. But there was a need to make known in as concrete a way as possible what was happening. Because of course, nowadays, for African countries or, or others, yes it's terrible, but it's, it's not very concrete for most people.

The primary way in which solidarity art helps make people's understanding more concrete is through conversations between buyer and seller, about the art. The passing on of information with arpilleras happened, typically, in the following way. Buyers would approach the salesperson's stall at a solidarity event, Latin America fair, or church, and would ask them what the arpilleras meant, who the makers were, and what was happening in Chile. The salespeople, well-informed and eager to explain, would talk about the scene depicted in the arpilleras, which was normally about poverty and repression, the women's lives, and the human rights violations occurring in Chile. Rodrigo, the son of exiles who sold in Bristol, explains:

> Every time we would sell an arpillera it would go directly along with 'why are you selling, who made them?' so it was always [Q: hmm], um, talking it wasn't just buy and sell, 'oh that's nice' [Q: right] It was never like that. [Q: oh] That's why um I mentioned this hippie kind of um, [Q; oh] because they're very interested, well-informed, so every arpillera that was sold I would say would go along with uh the roots of it and why and the causes
> […]
> Q: Can you remember what else they asked? Some specific questions?
> A: Well, basically um what materials they were made of, who made them why were they were made [Q: mhm] and then that led to deeper conversations 'Oh, what happened in Chile and who's Pinochet [Q: hmm] and what's happening?' So um you know small talk would come be converted into [Q: umm] um, um let's say uh an in depth analysis [Q: hmm] of the political situation

These conversations give potential buyers a more vivid impression of what people are experiencing under the dictatorship than what they might have read in the newspapers.

**Figure 7 ─** The back of an arpillera card with information about repression



As well as through conversation, the salespeople informed the public by using texts. They often gave out or showed the buyers a paragraph or leaflet about the makers and their situation. Many salespeople also produced and sold postcards, cards, calendars, and even a book of arpilleras, and these were effective conveyers of information, since, as well as the images, they contained text describing the problems experienced by the arpillera-makers and other groups depicted in the arpilleras.

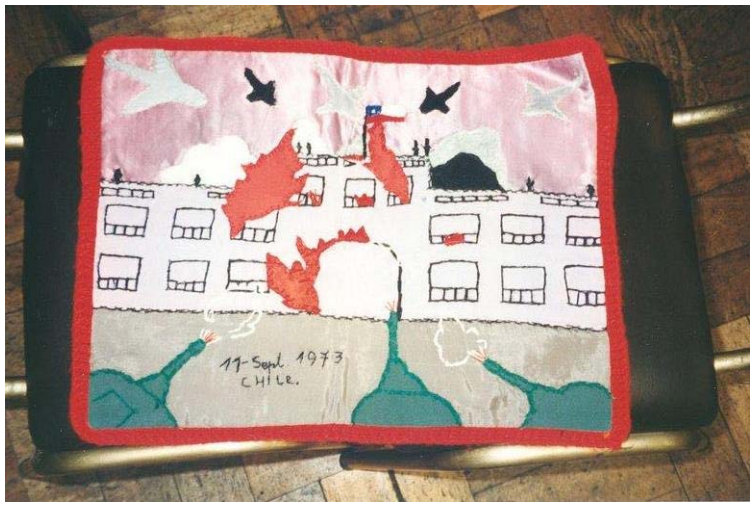
The arpilleras themselves also informed, since they showed aspects of the women's lives and repressive events occurring in Chile. They worked through figural depiction as well as symbolism. This one, for example, informs that torture is occurring:

**Figure 8 ─** Arpillera depicting torture



**Figure 9 ─** Arpillera depicting two students being set alight

**Figure 10 –** Arpillera depicting the bombing of La Moneda Palace, Chile's Whiltehouse






Hence, solidarity art helps sharpen the awareness of foreign publics about the government abuses and other social problems in the country the art comes from, through conversations with salespeople, the texts they hand out, and the art itself. All give potential buyers a more concrete sense of life lived under a repressive regime.

**Financial and Moral Support**

A second way art may help undermine a dictatorship is by raising support for the resistance of state violence and/or poverty, including financial and moral support. Solidarity art may help raise funds for individuals and organizations that work to resist repressive regimes. The sellers sent the money from the arpilleras they sold back to Chile. It went to the arpillera-makers and to the Vicaría de la Solidaridad and another Catholic organization that exported the art on a much smaller scale, both of which were supporting the victims of the regime's policies.

The women used the money, which was sorely needed, primarily to feed their children and pay bills and school fees. There were periods when they were supporting the whole family with the arpillera income, as their husbands tended to be unemployed or in prison; some were without a partner. Hunger and malnutrition were problems in many families, where mothers could give their children little more than bread and tea some days. The income the arpilleras brought enabled them to buy food, school matierals for their children, and pay the bills. Indeed, the wish to earn an income in order to feed the family was the women's primary motivation for joining the groups, an example of the "maternalist politics" so

common in Latin America, and discussed by Sonia Alvarez, Elizabeth Jelin, and others. Maria Romero, an arpillerista in Lo Espejo, states:

> My motivation was to have a bit of money. It was the poverty we were experiencing. So that was everyone's motivation, in the workshops, it was to be able to bring some money home. It didn't matter what theme it was, what you did didn't matter, the thing was to bring in some money, because everyone had children, and the children were the ones who were suffering the hunger, their fathers' unemployment, there were children who became orphans, because their father died, so the mother had to carry all the responsibility for the house. With unemployed husbands, the money you made wasn't enough, and on top of it, imagine, with five children in my case. There were others who had more, well, others had less, but the thing was that everyone had economic problems.

The money earned enabled the women to "do" gender as was expected of them in shantytown culture, that is care for their children, while at the same time not doing gender by becoming, in many cases, the main breadwinner and very active outside the home.

Not all the money earned from the sale of arpilleras went to Chile. Some of it, sometimes, went to the salesperson's exile or human rights organization in Europe or North America, organizations that, typically, aimed to help the victims of the regime and bring about the return of democracy, often working in liaison with resistance groups in Chile. Andy, who worked for the Chile Committee for Human Rights in London, mentions that any profit helped his organization fund its campaigns for raising awareness about Chile:

> So the profit margin would be quite small. But we star-, we were certainly going for a profit, profit margin because we were using it as a fund raiser for our human rights activities here, running our actual schemes, campaigns, so we'd all that printing, conferences etc.

*How did the arpilleras work to raise money?*

The arpilleras were effective in raising money in part because they fostered a sense of connection between the makers and buyers. The sense of connection came about because the arpillera was an object visibly "from the hands of" victims of the regime. Patricio, an exile in Paris, for example, stresses how the the handwritten messages on the backs of arpilleras, by the women, made the buyers feel in contact with them:

> It seems to me that… through the arpilleras human contact was achieved, that, to repeat what I said before, ah, every time that I opened a, a little envelope with a message about the arpillera, I felt that that Frenchman or French woman- and I always remember a mother with a daughter, for example, to whom I read a message, "we don't have, we don't have enough to eat, we have to go around collecting cardboard," for example, ah. A mother telling this to her daughter. I think that yes, we managed, to a degree, to produce a human encounter once again… and I think

> that the arpillera, for me, was that, the arpillera was a marvellous medium for bringing together two people, the one who is looking at the arpillera, the Frenchman far away, eh, comfortably off, not suffering any, any human rights violations or lacking material means, to bring, to bring him close to that reality. And to talk to him and say to him, "I lived this, I was a prisoner, I was in a torture center, I was, I have been with these people who make these arpilleras." In other words, to humanize relations. I think that that was tremendously necessary.

The arpilleras fostered a sense of contact.

Aiding the feeling of contact is the sheer materiality and tactile nature of the arpilleras, and of much solidarity art: it can be touched. This tactile element made the buyers, according to Noemi, an exile in Holland, feel close to the makers:

> Noemi: That also, they would touch them, they would touch them a lot. That was another thing that always- because ah! Yes. There were Dutch people who did not dare to touch, and the first thing that you have to do with the arpilleras when you ex-, exhibit them and are going to sell them, is say "touch, touch, touch, touch, all of this, touch the material, feel in your hands the, the, whatever, the girl's hair, the hair, the, the shoes, touch, touch. This is for touching." So that also made them, made them astonished, and the, the texture amazed them very much. To touch everything that, all those experiences, because when you touch them you also live them more. [JA: Yes] It is not the same as a painting that you, "a ha! Hm, yes, very nice." And you have to have your hands behind your back, you cannot touch the painting, the girl's ring, the, the, you can't. And you have to look at it from a certain distance, because if you look at it from very close you can see the, the lumps. Here it didn't matter. It didn't matter because that was not the point.

The ability to touch increased the feeling of contact or proximity between the experiences of the makers, and the buyers.

The arpilleras also worked, as a way of raising funds, by arousing strong emotions in buyers. Sellers described the buyers as "moved" time and again. Patricio's buyers were sometimes so moved that they didn't care which one they bought:

> I remember that many people would buy even without knowing where, where they were going to put the arpillera but for the principle. There were a lot of people to whom I would say "let's see, which one do you like?" "It doesn't matter, any one," they would say, "I want to buy something for these, for these people."

The arpillera moved Patricio's buyers to buy without thinking about it the utility of the arpillera.

Part of what made the transaction emotional was the sellers' constructing the arpillera makers as impoverished mothers who were struggling to feed their children, or to find their disappeared children. In doing so, they tapped into a notion of womanhood as motherhood,

and a motherhood that was devoted to children and trying to care for them, and needing protection. This notion helped boost the idea that the makers of arpilleras were worthy of support. Genevieve says:

> They [the buyers] know it is women that express the, the, the resistance, organization, etc., and that was also something that got a big response [from people], so people would buy it.

Many buyers bought with the understanding that their money would help the resistance, and groups of mothers of hungry children. This was one way in which the gender and poverty of the artists contributed considerably to the impact that the arpilleras had.

*Moral support*

For people who are persecuted by a powerful dictator, resistance can at times seem hopeless, and so moral support becomes very important. For the arpilleristas (arpillera-makers), Vicaría de la Solidaridad, and other members of the resistance community in Chile, the fact that people were buying arpilleras, and that they were protesting and putting pressure on their governments in other ways, was reassuring and morale-boosting. It meant that they were not alone in the struggle, that people abroad were aware of the problem, and struggling on their behalf. It made some arpilleristas, and also the women of the Agrupación, feel that their efforts were bearing fruit, and gave them the hope and courage to go on. This was very important at a time when it looked as if the Pinochet government was there to stay, and there was little hope. The words of Alba, a seller in Switzerland, who received letters from the arpilleristas, are suggestive:

> I think it's important for them, too, from the letters, to know first of all that elsewhere people are doing, to know that if they want to speak, someone is speaking to say what you cannot say. And also to know that someone is thinking about them, and supporting them without judging them.

The arpilleristas received moral support from the fact of people selling and buying their work. Hence, solidarity art helps bring about international awareness and resources including financial and moral support, which help the victims of poverty and repression.

**A Forum for the Dissemination of Information within the Country of Origin**

Solidarity art provides a forum within the country in which it is made for the dissemination of information about abuses by the government, how the people's rights are being violated, and

the extent and causes of other social problems. With censorship of the press, such information is hard to come by in repressive regimes. The information disseminated creates consensus that peoples are being unjustly treated and provides the motivation for doing something about it.

Nearly all the women express that before joining the arpillera groups they did not have much of the information they later acquired. They did not know about disappearances (unless they were themselves relatives of the disappeared), how much poverty there was, how widespread the problem of unemployment was, or what the causes of these ills were. The wives of party or trade union leaders, a minority, tended to be more aware. The women did not know because they were, for the most part, shut up in their homes, as shantytown gender expectations demanded. Yolanda, an arpillerista, says:

> Because there [in the training days that the arpillera makers attended] there were many women who were ignorant in many ways, ignorant, because we spent all our time in the house with our children, because we would not see what was happening outside. Maybe our own problem was simple compared with others', of other women who were going through worse things, like even until today, like having their husbands disappeared, their sons disappeared. So the, the fact of being in her world of the home, with the children, eh, well, you had a scare because your husband was arrested, but luckily he returned, and life goes back to normal, and you think that nothing is happening outside, that everythign outside is fine, and no! So these workshops were useful because there you would talk about those topics, about all those topics, for example, that some workmates were worse off than others, and we would try to find a solution.

What did the women learn about in the arpillera groups? They learned about the extent and causes of the repression, unemployment, poverty, and other social problems in the shantytowns. Specifically, they learned the thirty articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that they had rights, as human beings and as women. They also learned about the existence of political prisoners, about torture, about people being arrested in their homes and taken to the National Stadium, about the phenomenon of disappearance, and about injustice, and about the causes of some of their problems, such as unemployment, and that they were brought on by the policies of the regime. They also re-learned how to vote in 1988. Juanita expresses the range of knowledge about social problems related to poverty that the women acquired:

> You develop a social consciousness, more than anything, a social consciousness of justice. I acquired a lot, a lot of knowledge during that period, so I learned a lot.
> J: when you say social consciousness, what does it mean?
> A: well, being conscious of the reality, knowing that we were living in a period of injustice in the country. That our values were not beign given recognition, that there were a lot of things that we were lacking. It was learning, also, to see that if the husband was without work it was

> not his fault, but rather because there was no work; that the state was not capable of giving work to people, that companies closed down. You had to learn all that as well, to talk about all that. During that time of the dicatatorship many companies closed down and the owners took their money abroad. So all that was soemthing we had to talk about as well, to learn about, to learn that it was not the fault of, because [pause] sometimes when the husband is unemployed for a long time the wife tends to blame him, "You are lazy, that's why you are not working" [pause], so to see that what was happening was not that. That what was happening in the country affected what was happening in the home. So I think that the fact of getting out of the house was good, because women opened themselves up to another world, another vision, another way of seeing life.

*How did the arpillera groups foster this learning?*

Primarily, the women learned as the result of conversation in the groups, whereby they heard about news or the experiences of other women. Yolanda says:

> We would comment among ourselves, among ourselves, "hey, did you hear about what happened in such and such a place?", eh, "they beat such and such a person," or "and they broke such and such a thing in the house." All that, so, when talking about it there, the idea would be born of being able to do it, even if you had not seen it, even if you had not seen it, bur rather, imagining what was happening.

Similarly, Sara mentions:

> "We would talk about how they would raid the houses, all that."

Margarita, lastly, says:

> "What we talked about most was the president we had."

They learned through conversation.

Conversation could occur in any kind of group; another way, specific to art-making, whereby the women learned, was the requirement or effort to depict themes pertinent to human rights violations or recent events of repression and poverty. In order to depict such themes, the women sometimes had to inform themselves about them. In order to depict the articles of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, for example, the women had to learn them. Benita, an arpillerista, says:

> Many times we did the, the thirty articles of human rights. So for each article there were two or three arpilleas, because as there were many of us, so… you knew which theme you were meant to do, you knew that you were meant to do, for example, "every man must be free and…" so you knew, and also they would put, put a little paper up here.

The staff of the exporting organization (the Vicaría, which was a human rights organization) helped them with this learning, suggesting themes for their art and giving them copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Figure 11 ─** This arpillera is a variation on Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that refers to the right to food, clothing, housing, and medical care

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There were several other processes that led to the women's radicalization. These included visits to their art workshops by political leaders and groups of victims such as the relatives of the disappeared, who wanted to inform the population of their plight, the women's attending training sessions organized for them by the Vicaría de la Solidaridad, the Vicaría's showing the leaders of the groups clandestine films about political prisoners and the National Stadium, and the women's putting together a newsletter for arpillera groups. The workshops acted as a focal point, attracting organizations and resistance groups wanting to inform, or to express and "receive" solidarity, all of which had a radicalizing effect. Hence they exposed the women to a range of sources of information about the extent and causes of poverty and repression and to a range of people with varied experiences of repression. Previously, in contrast, the women had been in contact with very few peole outside their limited social and family circle in their neighborhood, and not many people outside it.

## Conclusion

Solidarity art that is exported and made collectively helps raise international awareness about the abuses of repressive regimes. It makes concrete for buyers the lives and experiences of those living under the dictatorship. It also serves to raise support, including financial and moral support, for resistance. What helps it do so is its ability to create a feeling of connection

between buyers and makers, and to arouse emotions in buyers. The gender of the artists may contribute to the emotional arousal, if, for example sellers construct the artists as struggling mothers. In these ways, solidarity art helps undermine dictatorships from outside the country where the art is made.

Within the country under the dictatorship, art-making, when it is collective, may create a forum for the dissemination of information about the extent and causes of repression, poverty, other social problems, and about the concept of human rights, about which, under repressive regimes, many individuals are unaware. It may also contribute to the reconstruction of civil society, as it leads to groups being formed, contact between groups occurring, and cohesive values such as solidarity and unity, as well as democratic values, being preserved.

Art works, and groups in which some art is made, are not by themselves a front line of major opposition to the dictatorship and will not overthrow the dictatorship. However, they are loci of resistance that work with other art forms and vehicles of information.

Together, these may contribute to the overthrow of a repressive regime. In this image, protesters in the funeral march of a French shantytown priest who was shot by a soldier, carry an arpillera that expresses their wish for peace, or an end to the state violence. It works together with the protest to express discontent with the regime.

**Figure 12 ─** Photograph of funeral march of André Jarlan, by Alvaro Hoppe

Furthermore, when it came to voting in the plebiscite of 1988, the arpillera groups were resources that the leaders of the "no campaign" could draw on. The political party members

who visited Juanita's arpillera group, for example, were able to talk to a number of people about how to sing protest songs and teach them how to vote, an accomplishment that would have been more difficult had the women not been organized into groups. Similarly, the arpilleristas would be called on to participate in protests, and thereby swell their numbers, and this would not have happened as easily were they not in groups. Moreover, in the transition to democracy, the arpillera groups helped form part of the new civil society. Some put forward demands to the new post-Pinochet government about the needs and rights of women. Art groups, in this way, may even help lay the foundations for the new democracy.

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